

1. Short Story Translation

Note: The following translated text is excerpted from the complete version in accordance with the size requirement of the assignment.

Title: The Separation

Author: Bingxin

1. A heavy hand push from a giant pulled me out of the stifling web that had caused my depression and pain, and for the first time I cried because of my sadness.
2. Opening my eyes, I saw one of my legs was still lifted upwards by one giant's hand and my two reddish fists swing under my head in the air.
3. With another giant hand softly holding up my waist, a man looked backward with a smile, said to a woman lying on the white-sheet bed, :“Congratulations! What a chubby baby boy!” Then he softly placed me at a little basket covered with white sheet.
4. I struggled my head to look outside. Many nurses in white uniform gathered around that woman in a silent and unorganized way. Her face got pale and sweated. She was groaning, as if she was awoke from a nightmare. Her eyelid got red and swollen and her eyes remained opened in a half way. Hearing the words from the obstetrician, she rolled her eyes and burst into tears, as if she was relieved of a heavy load. She was so tired that she almost closed her eyes, saying “thanks so much for all of your hard efforts”.

5. I cried bitterly: "No, it's you and me who had a hard time — we have just survived out of death."

6. The nurses kept bustling and wheeled my mother out, while I was carried out of the room as well. The doctor waved to a man and he came over from the end of corridor. He also got pale and excited, looking as if he had also just woken up from a nightmare. He stretched his arms to hold me with great care, staring at me with pity, concern and surprise. Doctor laughed and said "Isn't he a lovely baby?" He responded with shyness: "yes, but he had such a long head!" the man whispered.

7. Out of sudden I had a headache and I cried again and murmured, "Father, you should have known how painful I was squeezed out."

8. "Wow, what a loud voice!" the doctor laughed and handed me over to a smiling nurse nearby.

9. On the nurse's arms, I entered a large room with sunshine. Many white-colored little beds containing new born babies were placed against the walls. Some slept quietly, with their tiny fists lifting near the head. Some cried, as if saying "I am thirsty!", "I am hot!" or "I am wet!"

10. The nurse ignored all these sound and moved calmly and fast past to the bathroom at the inner room. I was placed down on a stone table by the wash basin, with my head towards the tap.

11. A flush of warm water showered onto my head, washing all the blood remains. I shivered and finally felt fresh. Turning my head over and across

the basin, I saw another baby, similarly being washed by another nurse. With a round head, big eyes, a dark complexion and a sturdy body, he was also awake and gazed quietly out of the window. Later I was lifted up softly and dressed in a long white smock. So did he. We faced each other across the basin. My nurse chatted to his: "Your baby looks so big and sturdy while mine is fair-skinned and delicate."

12. At this moment the baby lifted his head and stared at me, laughing as if with pity.

"Hello, my friend!" I said shyly.

"Hello, friend!" He responded amiably.

By this moment we two were laid into the baskets next to each other and the nurses left.

13. "I am aching all over my body", I confided, "The last four hours were really torturing for me and I finally got it over. How about you?"

14. "I was only suffocated for half an hour. Neither I and my mother suffered too much. " He clenched his little fists and smiled.

15. I turned to silence, looking around, and sighed due to boredom. He comforted me by saying "You are tired, so just go to sleep. I'll do the same thing."

16. When I was sleeping soundly, I was suddenly picked up and carried out of the glass door. Several young boys and girls stood along the corridor. They looked at me, with noses and palms touching against the glass door as if they

stood in front of the window of a Christmas gifts store with curiosity and envy. Pointing and commenting, they said that my eyebrows looked like my father's sister's, my eyes were like my mother's brother's, my nose resembled like my father's brother's, and my mouth was like my mother's sister. It was like they were trying to disassemble and engulf me.

17. I closed my eyes and shook my head heavily. I found my neck ached and I wept, "I am just myself. I don't resemble anyone. Let me go back to sleep!"

18. With a smile, the nurse carried me back to the room while I saw those youngsters leaving unwillingly amid pushing and laughing.

19. My little friend woke up just right now, and chatted to me: "You got up! Who came here to see you just now?" "Don't know, Probably my aunts and uncles. It seems that they all like me so much. " While I replied, I was put back to the basket.

20. The little baby paused for a while and then smiled: "How fortunate you are! It's the second day for us to be here, but I haven't yet seen my father."

21. I didn't realize I had slept so long. Right now my body did not ache that much. While I was wet, I did what other babies did by crying: "I am wet! I am wet!" As expected, one nurse came and picked me up. I was delighted, but only to find she gave me water to drink.

22. At dusk, three or four nurses hurried into the room with their uniforms rustling, picking all of the new-born babies up and changed the diapers. My roommates, the other babies, were overjoyed, "All of us are going to meet our

mothers. Bye-bye.”

23. My little friend was put in a big bed and wheeled out with other babies all together, while I was carried by a nurse through a glass door into the first room along the right-hand side of the corridor. Lying in high bed, my mother was waiting for me with expectant eyes. When I was put in her arms she undid her top. She looked young, her jet black hair tucked behind her ears and her curve eye-brows were like crescent moons. In the reflection of the dim lamp near the bed, she looked like a stone statue with her pale and bloodless face and large black eyes.

24. I started to suck while mother touched my hair with her cheeks; she caressed my fingers and looked me up and down with great delight and curiosity.

25. For twenty minutes I failed to get any milk. I was so hungry and my tongue tip was so painful that I opened my mouth and let go of the nipple. With panic, mother rocked me and comforted me: “My little precious. Don’t cry. Don’t cry.” Meanwhile, she rang the bell and a nurse came in. “Excuse me. I have no milk and he is crying so much. How can I handle it?” “No worry. the milk always comes sooner or later. He is too little to mind that.” The nurse picked me up and mother let go of me with reluctance.

26. When I was back to my basket, my little friend was already in his. Soundly sleeping, he was dreaming with constant smiling in content and delight. I started to look around. Most of my roommates were asleep while a

few were half-awake, humming and crying occasionally. I was starved, wondering when mother's milk would come. I actually did mind, but nobody knew. Witnessing all my other roommates slept well without hunger, I felt so jealous and ashamed that I cried loudly, hoping to get someone's attention. It was not until half an hour later that a nurse came. She pouted cheerfully and patted me, and said, "It's true. Your mum didn't feed you well. Drink some water instead." Then she thrust the teat of the feeding bottle into my mouth. I sucked at it in a groan, and gradually fell asleep as well.

27. When having a bath the next day, my little friend and I chatted across the wash basin. He was highly spirited. He shook his head and closed his eyes when bathed in the water. He exclaimed: "I had a good feed of milk from my mother yesterday. My mother has a round and dark face and is quite pretty. I am her fifth child. she told the nurse that this was her first time to deliver in a hospital because a charitable organization funded her here. My father is poor. As a butcher, he slaughters pigs." At this moment a drop of boric acid dip into his eyes. He gave a few cries of disgust and managed to open his eyes. He continued his words: "Isn't it piquant to kill pigs? A knife is thrust in with clean white blade but out with bloody-red one! When I grow up, I will learn to be a butcher just like my Father. I will not only slaughter pigs, but also those who behave like pigs which only eat and do not work!"

28. I listened to him attentively. Upon hearing this part, I shut my eyes at once, silently.

29. "So what about you? Were you well fed yesterday? How is your mother like?" I became excited, and said, "I had nothing to eat. My mother has not yet had milk, but the nurse said milk would come in a couple of days. My mother is so nice and she can read. There are piles of books and flowers around."

30. "And your father?"

31. "He has not come. Mother was at the room all by herself, saying nothing to anyone. I know nothing about my father. "

32. "That is the first-class ward," my little friend said with certainty. "There is only one bed in the room. Instead, my mother's ward was noisy, with a dozen beds or so. Many new-born babies have their mothers there and they are all well-fed."

33. The next day I finally saw my father. When I was fed, he was leaning against my mother's pillow. My parents were staring at me with their faces close to each other. My father had a thin, shallow face, sharp eyes with long eye-lashes. He often wrinkled as if he was always contemplative.

34. Father complimented , " This time I have a close look at him. He looks so beautiful, just like you."

35. Smilingly, mother tenderly touched me and responded, "He also smiles in your way."

36. My father stood up and sat by the bed, holding mother's hand with gentle pat. "We won't feel lonely any more. I will help you look after him and play with him after my teaching. We will take holiday with him around mountains

and waters. We must pay attention to his physical health as well so that he will not become who I am. There is nothing wrong, but I am not strong enough."

37. My mother said with a nodding, "Yes, he also needs to learn music and painting. I can not do either of these art forms and I feel my life is incomplete. And ..."

38. My father continued, "What kind of 'artist' do you want him to be? A writer or a musician?"

39. "Whatever he likes to be. Given that he is a boy, it would be best to become a scientist since China is short of science."

40. During their conversation, I struggled to keep silent, not having the heart to stop them even though I was having trouble getting any milk from my mother.

41. "We should begin to save up for his future education. The earlier the better. " Father added.

42. My mother said, "I forgot to tell you my younger brother promised a bicycle to him when he reaches six."

43. "So the child has everything. Didn't my younger sister buy him a cradle as a gift?" My father grinned with pride.

44. With a tight hug, my mother kissed my hair and said: "how fortunate you are, my little precious, to be born with love around. Be a good boy when you grow up..."

45. I returned to my bed in such a happy mood that I forgot my hunger.

Looking up, I found my little friend was deep in thought.

46. I broke the silence with a smile, “my friend, guess what, I saw my father today. He is a school teacher. My parents discussed about my future education and my father said he would do everything good for me. My mother said it doesn’t matter if she can not feed me because I can have cow’s milk powder and orange juice when I go home... ” I uttered without a break.

47. “How lucky you are! I will not get anymore milk when at home because my mother will be employed as a wet-nurse for another family. I heard this from my father. He also said I’ll be leaving within a couple of days to be taken care by my grandma who is over sixty. I will eat rice-porridge and sweetened rice flour. It’s OK. I don’t care! ”

48. I said nothing, with my sense of contentment vanishing and I felt even ashamed.

49. Instead, my little friend spoke with pride and brevity in his eyes, “You’ll always be like a potted flower, blooming tenderly in a greenhouse in a constant temperature, sheltering you from wind or rain. Instead, I’ll be like the grass by the roadside, withstanding being trodden by passer-by and beaten by the wind or rain. You’ll probably have a pity on me when seeing me from your greenhouse window. But you don’t need to do that. Imagine, I’ll have vast sky over my head, fresh air, free butterflies and crickets around

me. I'll also have numerous humble, yet brave companions who survive either burning or mowing. We will dot the whole world with grass green!"

50. I almost cried with embarrassment, "I did not choose to be so delicate! ..."

I murmured.

51. Awakening from his fantasy, he softened and relieved me by saying, "Absolutely, none of us want to be different from others, but there is always something separating us. Let's see what will happen to us later."

Note: The translation ends here and there is about 40% left.

2. Translation Commentary

2.1 The reason why I select this short story

This selected short story is excerpted from the full version written by Bingxin, 1900-1999, a well-known female Chinese writer of gentle poems, stories and essays that enjoyed great popularity in modern China and the world. Why I chose a story from her is because her works are well read by Chinese readers, especially the children including me, winning extensive affection and reverence. Indicated by the connotation of her name 'Bingxin', meaning 'pure in heart' in Chinese, her works bring a sense of beauty, warmth and imagination to the readers. This story, written in 1931, was one of her representative works, depicting the distinct experiences of two new-born babies in the hospital with the first person point of view. Although the story

was written almost a century ago, Bingxin, who was Well-educated in the U.S, made the story well readable and understandable even for western readers. However, there are still room and charm to interpret, clarify and comment in terms of translation due to different social, cultural and linguistic norms.

2.2 Translation Strategy

In terms of the translation theoretical guidance or style, I think the Horatian model is used. I try to translate with the purpose of have the target reader access to it. My expectation is that my target readers, my teacher, or if any others in the UK, can understand the language and theme of the story easily. I will use free translation, sense-to-sense translation. In this part, I will present the details of the thoughts during translation as follows.

2.1 The title Translation

The one-character Chinese title ‘分 (fen)’ actually can be interpreted with several meanings in Chinese context. Literally, it could mean the delivery process that a new-born baby is separated from his or her mother’s body. Looking through the whole story, the two babies were treated distinctly or unequally, thus the title could suggest the social class division, or separation occurred so early as they were born due to different economical classes of the babies’ parents. Therefore, the word ‘separation’ is used to remain the pun, causing the readers to probe the exact theme.

2.2 In paragraph 3, why the doctor said “Congratulations! What a chubby baby boy!” to the mother is because in traditional Chinese culture, boys are

more valued than girls for a family, especially a chubby new-born boy. Therefore, this saying is heard quite a lot in many literary works or TV plays or novels to indicate a happiness and hope of a family. Here the translation sticks to the original literal meaning.

2.3 In paragraph 4, the sentence 'as if she was relieved of a heavy load' is a free translation, meaning 'fully relaxed'. The literal meaning of Chinese text ('放下一百个心似的') actually means 'as if one hundred hearts were put down', which might be misunderstood by the English readers. Another point worth mentioning in this paragraph is the translation of "thanks so much for all of your hard efforts". Original Chinese text is "真辛苦你们了", literally meaning "What hard work you all have done!", which is, pragmatically, a way to express gratitude.

2.4 In paragraph 6, 'He stretched his arms to hold me with great care' is a free translation. Original Chinese is '两只手要抱又不敢抱似的', literally meaning 'He wants to hold with his two hands but he is not brave enough to do that', which describes the nervousness and inexperience of a new father.

2.5 In paragraph 11, the sentence "Your baby looks so big and sturdy while mine is fair-skinned and delicate". The original Chinese text of 'fair-skinned' is "白净", literally meaning 'white and clean'. However, the 'fair-skinned' is used to indicate the pale color of a baby instead of 'white'.

2.6 In paragraph 16, the sentences like 'my eyes were like my mother's brother's, my nose resembled like my father's brother's, and my mouth was

like my mother's sister' reveal the difficulty of translating the kinship in Chinese language. Different from English, there are different 'titles' or words for the children to call father or mother's sister or brother, or even different 'titles' or words for father or mother's elder or younger sister or brother. Therefore, the translation here uses 'my mother's brother' instead of 'my uncle', 'my mother' sister' instead of 'my aunt'. This detailed translation can reveal the truth that both parents at least have brother or sisters. The case is the same in paragraphs 42 and 43.

2.7 In paragraph 20, the sentence 'How fortunate you are!' is translated based on the implied meaning. The original Chinese '你好福气', literally meaning 'you have an air of happiness of fortune'. Here the simple translation help to reveal the difference of the two babies.

2.8 In paragraph 23, the sentence 'her curve eye-brows were like crescent moons' is a usage of free translation. The original Chinese '新月', literally meaning 'new moon' is based on lunar calendar, which regards the moon in the beginning of every lunar month as new moon. Here the author just indicates that the eye-brows are like the shape of the new moon, the crescent.

2.9 In paragraph 25, the sentence of 'Excuse me...' is a free translation. The original Chinese sentence is '没有别的事', literally meaning 'there is nothing important'.

2.10 There are several points worth explaining in paragraph 27. First, the name of the organization is '慈幼会' in Chinese, literally meaning 'A

Charitable Organization for Children’ and this name seems to reveal its Christianity background. Since this is an institute in 1930s and does not exist today, therefore it is just simply translated. Secondly, the sentence ‘A knife is thrust in with clean white blade but out with blood one!’ is literally translated from a Chinese idiom, ‘白刀子进去,红刀子出来’. Usually the idiom is uttered by those barbaric grass-root cruel people in their violent killing acts. Thirdly, the sentence ‘I will not only slaughter pigs, but also those who behave like pigs which only eat and do not work!’ is translated literally. In Chinese Han dominated society, pork is the main meat for meals and pigs are regarded as very lazy and dirty animal. Therefore, people behaving like pigs are looked down and criticized in Chinese society by ‘working class’ in 1930s.

2.11 In paragraph 36, ‘after teaching’ is translated from Chinese ‘下课’, literally meaning ‘getting down from class’, which can be used by both teacher and students. To well indicate the profession of ‘father’, I translate it into ‘after teaching’.

2.12 In paragraph 46, here ‘cow’s milk powder and orange juice’ were specifically mentioned is because these items seem common today, but they are luxuries for the common people in 1930s. These details can well contrast the two babies’ families, as latter revealed in paragraph 47, the other boy only ‘eat rice-porridge and sweetened rice flour’, which is usually used to feed babies in rural, poor families.

2.13 This paragraph is indeed excellent in its symbolic meanings conveyed

from the images. A series of metaphor and simile are used creatively. The images of 'potted flower, a potted flower' and 'grass by the roadside' are a pair of symbols showing both vulnerable, over-protective people and hard-working, brave, determined ones. These symbols in 1930s might reveal the author's attitude towards the ideology of working class. 'We will dot the whole world with grass green' could be understood as the declaration of the revolution of the working class at that time.

3. Particular problems in translation.

Although this short story seems not to be very culturally alien to the target readers, I did have several problems translating this short story. One is that the words choice, such as the title, and some other parts, where the translation is not only to convey semantic meaning, but also to convey phonetic similarities, such as 'hard' in paragraph 4 and 5. Second one is the dialogue translation, which is repetitive and yet conveys the speaker's emotional state, I tried to use more accurate and specific words, such as, 'murmured', 'exclaimed' , etc. to translate the act of saying something. The third is that I am short of the knowledge about the real life in 1930s in China. I need to know how people lived, especially how people are hospitalized at that time so that the translation is understandable.

4. Expectation of the translated text

I am by no means an expert translator and my translation is expected to reach the western readers aiming at opening a door to them about the people's life

in China in 1930s. On the one hand, we can glance a little at the tendency that China was westernized and modernized. The modern hospital itself, nurses, the Christmas gift store and charitable organization, etc, are all its products, showcasing the physical transformation of China. What's more, unavoidably influenced by the ideology at that age, the author seems to convey a separated realistic society and yelled out the power of the mass of working class at that peculiar time. However, all of these class division, physical and spiritual differences, are generated when a new life just comes into the world, which may indicate the determinism of the characters. I therefore ask the possible readers to argue whether it is universal or only historically or geographically limited.

My essay ends here and thanks for your time.

